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REARRANGEMENT OF THE COLLECTION OF THE ANTIQUARIANS (See cuts p. 29)

In consultation with the officers of the Antiquarians important improvements have been made in the installation of the textile collection. Room 43 has been appropriated to oriental objects, Japanese, Chinese, Persian and East Indian, and Room 45 to products of western decorative art. The valuable accession of small examples of textiles from Field Museum makes this department strong, and the compact arrangement in swinging frames enables us to exhibit a great number of specimens in the most satisfactory manner. The advantages of this method of installation cannot well be over-emphasized. Its compactness and accessibility are such that the collections of any ordinary museum may as well be kept on view as in storage. The protection from dirt is remarkably perfect. The general appearance is agreeable, and the visitor likes to turn the frames and put them in the best light. Rearrangement is perfectly easy. And to crown all, the frames shade each other, so that the objects are kept in darkness or a very low light nearly all the time. Three sides of the large gallery, No. 45, are now occupied by these framed textiles, the space above them being utilized for tapestries. The floor is nearly free of cases, so that the tapestries and the El Greco picture, now here installed, are well seen.

A doorway has been cut from this gallery to the great corridor (No. 46) in which the porcelains, ivories, medals and various decorative objects not belonging to the Antiquarian collection are installed. This makes the whole installation logical and satisfactory as regards classification. From the picture galleries, ending with the Munger Collection (No. 40), the visitor passes into the mixed collections of the Nickerson Rooms, partly

pictures and partly oriental jades and Japanese objects (Nos. 41, 42, 44), thence into the oriental room of the Antiquarians (No. 43); thence to the gallery of western textile art (No. 45), and finally to the general collection of western decorative objects (Nos. 46, 47). Of course with rapidly growing collections no installation can remain long unchanged; and it is the uncertain development of collections that constitutes the fundamental difficulty in planning museum buildings with fixed sections for particular classes of objects.

A SUPPLEMENTARY COLLECTION OF BROCADE PATTERNS, PRESSED VELVETS, ETC.

The Art Institute has entered into the possession of an important addition to its collection of textiles by a loan (which will probably become a permanent transfer) from the Field Museum of Natural History. These objects have been installed in swinging frames along the South wall of the Antiquarian Room, gallery 45. Like the main body of the anterior exhibits, the present accession, which numbers about 900 specimens and will fill approximately 75 swinging frames, was purchased in Italy by Mr. Martin A. Ryerson. It includes cotton, silk and woolen brocades, silk weaves with gold and silver figures, velvets, embroideries and lace. The countries and centers of industry chiefly represented are Sicily, Lucca, Florence, Venice and Genoa in northern Italy, Lyons, Switzerland and the Netherlands.

The earliest pattern weaves that find illustration in Mr. Ryerson's selections are Byzantine models of the XI and XII centuries, with the confronted birds and quadrupeds peculiar to that style. Our modern Romanesque houses and churches would supply good settings for mural decorations of

this style, painted, printed or woven. The Persian pomegranate and pomegranate trellis pattern dominates the output of northern Italy during the XIV, XV and XVI centuries, and is well represented by many silk and velvet brocades of the present collection. Alongside of it, in the XVI century, geometric and foliage patterns and arabesque figures assert themselves. The XVII century revels in large leaf patterns and formal arrangements of classical motives, the XVIII century in naturalistic plant forms, striped grounds, flower sprays and garlands, with Arcadian additions, sometimes, of birds, shepherds' crooks and hats, and of musical instruments and knotted ribbons.

Many of the old fabrics serve, or did serve, as ecclesiastical vestments, copes and chasubles, amices, stoles and maniples. There are many fragments of vestments in the new collection. Early XIX century brocades served more commonly for ordinary clothing. They illustrate a marked decline of the art of design and of the color-sense. One specimen, which was manufactured and worn probably under King Louis XVIII of France or his brother Charles X (1815-1830), is a scarlet waistcoat with black velvet flowers.

The common belief that every country observed styles of its own in the arts of building, ceramics, furniture-making, dress, sculpture and painting is largely erroneous. The Greek Empire, Russia, Sicily, southern Italy and Venice observed the traditions of Byzantine art with great uniformity at a given period. The whole of western Europe accepted the Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, rococo and neo-Greek orders of structural and decorative design at once. It is consequently a difficult matter to determine the Sicilian or mainland Italian, the Venetian

or Genoese, French or Netherlandish provenience of brocade patterns with security. A curator must accept his own attributions with a degree of reserve. The long manufacture of identical patterns in one factory or in one region often invests our determinations of date with some uncertainty. Dr. Julius Lessing does not venture to decide whether the splendid Byzantine fabric which wraps the bones of Charlemagne at Aix—a repeated silk brocade figure of elephants—is a product of Charlemagne's own time (VIII and IX centuries) or of the age of Emperor Otho, by whom the body of his predecessor was reinterred in the X century. The hesitancy of so eminent an authority in this capital case indicates the degree of caution with which anybody's labels must be received. The much-quoted modern definition of a museum as 'a collection of instructive labels, suitably illustrated by the objects to which they are attached or appended,' deserves attention only as a witty paradox. In an art museum, especially, the object will always be the real thing.

It is a matter of regret that so many of these old time fragments of fabrics and embroideries have to be mounted on cards, not precisely helter-skelter, but too often, nevertheless, with considerable detriment by conflict of color, texture, shape, etc., to their intended artistic values. The taste of qualified customers, architects and interior decorators must be relied upon to restore the textile art to honor, and the clever combinations of the ancient weavers to practical efficiency. A. E.

THE NEW AMERICAN PRIZES OF ROME.

The Art Institute has been invited to interest itself in the new prizes of Rome. The Paris "Prizes of Rome", which enable successful French students of art to spend years